

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT 7PM, ON
TUESDAY, 8 MARCH 2021
ENGINE SHED, SAND MARTIN HOUSE**

Committee Members Present: Councillors O Sainsbury. (Chair), N Moyo, J. Allen, C Hogg, B Tyler, John Fox and Co-opted Member Parish Councillor Neil Boyce

Officers Present: Rob Hill, Assistant Director, Community Safety
Sean Evans – Head of Service, Housing Needs
Ian Phillips, Head of Communities and Partnership Integration
Matt Oliver, Head of Think Communities
Karen Dunleavy, Democratic Services Officer

Also Present: Cllr Shaheed, Chair of the Task and Finish Group to Promote Equality and Diversity Amongst Councillors

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from the following councillors:
Cllr Casey – Cllr Moyo was in attendance as substitute
Cllr Knight
Cllr Haseeb
Cllr Fenner
Cllr Yasin
Cllr Iqbal
Cllr Sandford – Cllr Hogg was in attendance as substitute

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND WHIPPING DECLARATIONS

No declarations of interest or whipping declarations were received.

51. MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 JANUARY 2022

The minutes of the Communities Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 4 January 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to an amendment to the date of the meeting.

52. CALL IN OF ANY CABINET, CABINET MEMBER OR KEY OFFICER DECISIONS

There were no requests for call in to consider.

53. REPORT OF TASK AND FINISH GROUP - TO PROMOTE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY AMONGST COUNCILLORS

The report was introduced by Councillor Shaheed the Chair of the Task and Finish Group accompanied by the Head of Communities and Partnership Integration. The Chair provided

the committee with context behind the remit of the Task and Finish Group and work that had been undertaken to enable them to reach their conclusions and recommendations.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members queried why there were no Parish Councillors or Co-opted Members on the Task and Finish Group. The Chair responded that this had not been discussed.
- Members noted that the report had stated that the behaviour between councillors had recently improved but sought clarification as to whether it was felt that restorative action would be beneficial going forward. The Chair advised that it was essential that the recommendations made in the report relating to councillor conduct were approved to assist with this going forward.
- Members sought clarification as to whether the training mentioned in the report would also be open to Parish Councillors. The Officer present advised that it would seem sensible to offer the training to Parish Councillors as well but would have to speak to Executive and Members Services to see if this would be possible.
- Members commended the report but believed it paramount to have evidence based policy and wanted to know what information had been gathered from other Local Authorities particularly statistical neighbours. It was also noted that only two key witnesses were interviewed and that it also might be helpful to get feedback from the new Chief Executive. It was also noted that there had been a very low response rate to the survey with only 29 of the 60 councillors responding. The Officer advised that a number of local authorities had been contacted through the Scrutiny network with regard to best practice, the model code of conduct and claiming expenses. The response rate was low but out of those that responded most were using the model code of conduct and had a similar policy in place for claiming expenses. The officer agreed that the response to the survey was low and that the survey could be repeated on an annual basis to identify any potential emerging issues that needed to be addressed.
- Cllr John Fox a member of the Task and Finish Group commented that a lot of work had gone into producing both reports and it was hoped that the recommendations would be accepted, however it was disappointing that there were no sanctions from Government in place for councillors who may be in breach of the Code of Conduct.
- Members were pleased to note that there was an Employee Assistance Programme in place that could be accessed by councillors and the recommendation to rename and promote this was important.
- Members suggested that recommendation three be amended to include the word *Members* so that it read “*Executive and Member Services and Members should be asked to consider whether additional refresher training on Member conduct is required as part of the wider training and development programme*”. The Committee unanimously agreed to this amendment.
- Members sought clarification as to whether councillors were employees of the council. The Assistant Director advised that he was not sure and would find out.
- Councillor Moyo proposed that recommendation one be amended from “*The constitution should be amended to remove all gender related titles and in addition, the Mayor should be addressed in the same format as councillors i.e., Mayor surname*” to say the following: “*The constitution should be amended to update any use of chairman title to chair and in addition, it should be up to the Mayor’s discretion whether they are addressed as Mr Mayor, Madam Mayor or in the same format as Councillors, for example Mayor and then surname*”. Councillor Hogg seconded the proposal which was unanimously agreed.

- There being no further questions the Chair read out each of the remaining recommendations to seek approval. Councillor Moyo proposed that recommendation five be amended to include the following wording “*Yearly consultations of the training should be conducted, which should also include Members to ensure that the data was representative, and for revisions to be made to the code of conduct accordingly*”. The Committee unanimously agreed to this additional wording.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Task and Finish Group’s report and recommendations and highlighted amendments contained within; namely:

Recommendation one:

The constitution should be amended to update any use of chairman title to chair and in addition, it should be up to the Mayor’s discretion whether they are addressed as Mr Mayor, Madam Mayor or in the same format as Councillors, for example Mayor and then surname.

Recommendation two:

All councillors should be made aware of the policies around claiming expenses to meet caring needs to allow them to effectively carry out their role. As part of a wider programme of meeting training and development needs, the publication of the availability of allowances for caring needs should be ensured.

Recommendation three

Executive and Member Services **and Members** should be asked to consider whether additional refresher training on Member conduct is required as part of the wider training and development programme.

Recommendation four:

The Employee and Assistance programme should be renamed to the Employee and Member Assistance programme and a briefing session held with Members to highlight the support available and how it can be accessed.

Recommendation five:

Regular, comprehensive and solution focussed training and briefings should be held for councillors on how to effectively handle bullying and harassment, including advice for keeping safe. **Yearly consultations of the training should be conducted, which should also include Members to ensure that the data was representative, and for revisions to be made to the code of conduct accordingly.**

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Committee also requested that the Assistant Director, Community Safety seek clarification as to whether councillors were classed as Council employees.

54. INTERIM REPORT OF THE TASK AND FINISH GROUP TO EXAMINE THE ISSUES WITH CAR CRUISING IN PETERBOROUGH

The report was introduced by Councillor Hogg who was a member of the Task and Finish Group and was representing Councillor Howell the Chair of the Task and Finish Group who was unwell and unable to attend. Councillor Hogg provided the committee with context behind the remit of the Task and Finish Group and work that had been undertaken to enable them to reach their interim conclusions and recommendations. The report was an interim report which would allow the committee to provide feedback and suggestions on additional lines of enquiry.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members noted that there were no Parish Councillors as Co-opted Members on the Task and Finish Group and sought clarification as to whether Parish Councils had been consulted on the report. Councillor Hogg advised that there had not been any formal invitation for Parish Councils to get involved. The Chair of the Group, Councillor Howell had been very active in updating Orton Waterville Parish Council on the current situation regarding car cruising of which she was a member. The biggest hotspot for car cruising had been in the Orton Waterville ward.
- Members queried if surveillance cameras could be used in the Orton Southgate area to capture the number plates of those offending. The Assistant Director, Community Safety informed Members that there were a number of stipulations on how surveillance cameras could be used, and this was regulated by The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, or 'RIPA' as it was commonly known which governed the use of covert surveillance by public bodies. Provided they met the appropriate RIPA regulations they could be used. This would be considered by the Task and Finish Group at a future meeting.
- Councillor Hogg informed the Committee that some businesses in Stapledon Road had CCTV cameras and had invited the police to look at the recordings, but this had not been taken up. The Council did have CCTV cameras located in the Pleasure Fair Meadow car park and CCTV operators were being encouraged to report any anti-social behaviour directly to the police.
- Members sought clarification as to what funding options had been considered. Councillor Hogg advised that there were small pots of money around and these would be investigated further.
- Members advised of similar car cruising issues in other wards across the city. Members were informed that during the pandemic car racing had increased as the roads had been less busy. The Task and Finish Group had felt that it needed to be a joint response from the council and the police and other partners to address the situation.
- Members sought clarification as to what attempts had been made to engage with the car cruising community and were informed that it had been difficult to engage with them and whilst attempts had been made to engage with them no one had come forward.
- The Assistant Director, Community Safety advised the Committee that regarding recommendation three the Police and Crime Commissioners office had been in contact and advised that they did not deal with operational matters and that this recommendation would need to be directed to the Chief Constable or through the Safer Peterborough Partnership.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to endorse the Task and Finish Group's report and recommendations and highlighted amendments contained within; namely:

Recommendation one

That the council shares this interim report with Cambridgeshire Police with a view to agreeing a memorandum of understanding which supports the Council with the implementation of injunction(s), community protection orders or public space protection orders.

Recommendation two

That the Chief Executive of Peterborough City Council and a member of the Council's cabinet agree to champion this issue and to engage with both Peterborough MPs and the Police and Crime Commissioner to secure their support in championing this issue.

Recommendation three

That the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Police and Crime Commissioner is asked to **work with the Chief Constable to compile a report** on how the police should tackle this issue.

Recommendation four

That the council fully costs the financial implications of developing an injunction for car meets in Peterborough.

Recommendation five

That the council fully costs the financial implications of introducing Community Protection Orders.

Recommendation six

That the council fully costs the financial implications of developing measures to prevent car meets from taking place at Pleasure Fair Meadow car park, as part of the Woodston PSPO.

Recommendation seven

That the Highways Team produces detailed plans, with a clear indication of costs, of how it proposes to alter the layout of Stapledon Road to ensure it is no longer suitable for antisocial driving.

Recommendation eight

That the Task and Finish Group continues its work by exploring sources of funding that are available to reduce the funding burden on city finances.

Recommendation nine

That the Task and Finish Group makes a further attempt to engage the car cruise community.

Recommendation ten

That the council's Planning Department should actively consider whether future planning applications should consider measures that will prevent antisocial driving.

55. HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING: END OF YEAR UPDATE AND THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The report was introduced by the Head of Service, Housing Needs and provided the Committee with an update on the work of the Housing Needs Service and how COVID had impacted demand and delivery.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members asked how successful the Protect and Vaccinate programme had been among those who were homeless and rough sleepers. Members were advised that funding had been utilised to increase the uptake of the vaccine. It was noted that there had been an increase in uptake but there was still some vaccine hesitancy.
- Members sought clarification on the self-contained sleeping spaces that were due to become available to rough sleepers. The Officer confirmed that they were already available and were safe sleeping spaces not accommodation. They were in the form of a portakabin with a bed, toilet and electric charging point and provided those who needed it with somewhere safe to sleep. There were currently two sites with three units available and the Light Project were co-ordinating the project.
- Further clarification was sought on the demographic of individuals who had used the safe sleeping spaces and if they were being used by people who were hesitant to use a night shelter. Members were advised that this was difficult to quantify but all who used the spaces would be supported. The safe sleeping space was a place for someone to bed down overnight and be safe and an alternative to sleeping rough, but they would need to leave the accommodation the following morning. However, the Light Project was able to bring the individuals into the city centre after their stay and help engage them in community activity to give them focus throughout the daytime. Members were also advised that only local individuals would be able to use these spaces and not rough sleepers from other towns.
- Members asked if the demographic of the homeless within the city was monitored. Members were advised that the service continued to monitor homelessness and collected as much data as was allowed. It had been noted that there had been a change in demographic over the last few years and there had been an increase in women presenting as homeless. The service worked closely with the police to ensure women who had been subject to sexual exploitation or abuse were supported. The Officer provided Members with a detailed explanation of the support available to women who found themselves homeless.
- Members noted that there had been a significant increase in homeless activity outside the supermarkets in the city and queried if the service were doing anything to support the supermarkets. Members were advised that it was a continual battle and that those begging had a reason for doing so with a route cause which might be an addiction of some kind, but all of them had accommodation. The service was open to everyone who was genuinely homeless for assistance. The Outreach Team have been speaking to the supermarkets to offer advice and assistance. There was limited legislation in place to be able to take enforcement action with regard to people begging.
- Members asked about the supply of social housing to those who were homeless and rough sleeping. The Officer advised that it was challenging as the delivery of housing was patchy due to Covid and supply of raw materials to build houses which in turn was slowing down delivery. This included shared ownership and help to buy schemes. The amount of affordable rented accommodation through social landlords was not sufficient to meet demand.
- Members were concerned about the effect 'empty nesters' were having on social housing and asked what the service was doing to encourage them into more appropriate housing. Members were advised that in the social sector priority was focused on the high demand accommodation and to encourage people to move into smaller accommodation if relevant. The spare room subsidy was also in place which penalised people for those empty rooms if they were in receipt of benefit to support their rent. However, there was nothing the service could do regarding enforcement to make people leave their family home. However, the service did encourage those who were under occupying their property to release it to someone who really needed it.

- Members sought clarification on how the service planned on supporting Ukrainian refugees in finding accommodation. Could there be a campaign to ask people to take refugees into their own homes. Members were advised that there had been detailed discussions on how best the council could support any refugees that came to the city and providing accommodation was an important part of the discussions.
- Members suggested the provision of temporary prefabricated housing provision. Officers advised that this had been looked at on a number of occasions but the Council had decided not to follow this through, due to there not being enough available council owned land. There may be some land available through Cross Keys Homes and discussions were continuing with them regarding this, however it should be noted that the infrastructure for fabricated homes would be the same as for a brick-built house and therefore not much cheaper in cost.
- Members sought clarification on the homelessness presentation data and if the applications that were rejected were given support thereafter. Members were advised that all applications were triaged when received and contact was made whether rejected or not. Those applications that had been rejected were given assistance regarding housing needs on how to reapply or gain support from the correct service. They were also assigned a Housing Assistance officer.
- Members asked if accommodation support continued to be provided to rough sleepers after Government provision had stopped. The Officer advised that outreach workers continued to contact those in that cohort and work was done to support individuals in making them eligible for further assistance or if applicable repatriate them to their home country.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to note the report and requested that the Head of Service, Housing Needs revisit incentives for households who are under occupying their social housing with Peterborough City Council Housing Association partners.

56. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

This item was deferred with the agreement of the Chair, Vice-Chair and Group Representatives.

57. SOCIAL MOBILITY (PETERBOROUGH HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND AND COMMUNITY HUB DELIVERY)

The report was introduced by the Head of Think Communities. The report requested that the Committee note the delivery and approach of the Peterborough Household Support Fund and provided information on the plans to de-escalate isolation support payments in line with the national removal of COVID restrictions.

The report included updates on how the service continued to work with the Safer Peterborough Partnership delivery group on social mobility. The focus was on finding solutions to the challenges of the pandemic as the service transitions into the phase of living with COVID.

Further information was presented on the role of the partner network and the intention to interrogate the data collected to better understand how best to help the city's residents.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee debated the report and in summary, key points raised and responses to questions included:

- Members commented that social mobility ought to be provided from the beginning and Early Years Centres. Given the concerns around a loss of funding, Members asked if the scheme worked with educational services. The Officer advised that the Safer Peterborough Partnership delivery group had a cross cutting membership which included Early Years and Early Help representation, and the College and the Targeted Youth Support Service. Further work on social mobility would be taking place and the connection with Early Years was very important.
- Members acknowledged the large number of requests for assistance and sought clarification on the demographics of those who had made those requests had been collected. Members were informed that one of the benefits in the way the scheme had been delivered was that it allowed for data information to be analysed. The service would be using that information to learn and direct support to where it was most needed.
- Members were mindful that the increase in utility bills was concerning and asked if there were plans in place to support individuals. Members were advised that the service utilised its funding well. Every contact made was provided with income maximisation support and advised of the Affordable Warm Scheme and LEAP the Local Energy Advice Service.
- Members queried the impact that may be had with the de-escalation of the isolation support payment. The Officer advised that this was something being investigated closely with Public Health partners and the Enduring Transmission Programme. Peterborough had been designated as a place that had Enduring Transmission and consideration was being given as to how to support people who might otherwise continue to go to work instead of isolating. Members were advised that the service was limited in what they could do enforcement wise, given that the requirement to isolate had been removed.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee **RESOLVED** to

1. Note the delivery, outputs and approach of the Peterborough Household Support Fund and Community Hub Delivery.
2. Note the plans to de-escalate isolation support payments in line with national and local removal of covid restrictions.

58. MONITORING SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Democratic Services Officer introduced the report which enabled the committee to monitor and track the progress of recommendations made to the Executive or Officers at previous meetings.

No comments were received and therefore the items marked as completed were accepted.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the report and **RESOLVED** to note the responses from Cabinet Members and Officers to recommendations made at previous meetings as attached in Appendix 1 to the report.

59. FORWARD PLAN OF EXECUTIVE DECISIONS

The Chairman introduced the report which invited members to consider the most recent version of the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and identify any relevant items for inclusion within the Committee's work programme or to request further information.

Members referred to the following decision:

Disband Peterborough City Market from Laxton Square and relocate to a new location – KEY/11OCT21/04

Members wanted to know what the gap was between the traders having to leave the existing market location and having to relocate to the new units. Members were informed that there would be a smooth relocation and they would move directly from their existing location to the new one on the same day.

Members noted that when the units came forward for approval there had been a meeting with market traders on the design of the doors. Members sought assurance that the amended design as agreed with the market traders would be in place. The Assistant Director, Community Safety advised that the design alterations were currently being worked through.

ACTIONS AGREED:

The Communities Scrutiny Committee considered the current Forward Plan of Executive Decisions and **RESOLVED** to note the report.

CHAIRMAN

7pm – 8.33pm

This page is intentionally left blank